

By MIKE WHITESMAN: Maidenhead Utd. 1, Wycombe Wand. 0

SECONDS from the final whistle, Maidenhead United added the final frustrating chapter to a sorry saga of events in Saturday's Berks and Bucks Senior Cup semi-final at York Road.

Awarded a free kick to the right of the Wycombe area, they worked one of the very few slick moves of the match to catch the Isthmian's defence off guard, and return their second shock result in the competition this season.

In a previous round, the Athenian Leaguers had ousted much fancied Slough Town by a convincing margin.

But if that match was anything like Saturday's, then they might as well give little Wolverton and B.R. the trophy now.

As a semi-final, the football produced by two of the allied counties' top clubs, would have fallen below Intermediate standards.

On Maidenhead's small pitch, niggly clashes of individuals upset any rhythm either side might have begun with. The result, in front of a surprisingly small crowd, was inevitable—near farce.

But not all the blame lies with the players. Referee Mr. Faulkner was far too lenient in the early stages of the game, which developed accordingly. Once the referee decided to exert his authority to the full, the damage was already done.

And, although officially he was quite right in ordering Keith Searle off for retaliating one can't help feeling that injustice somehow undermined the entire incident.

Perhaps had United's robust centre half, McPhee, suffered a similar fate, rather than a mere booking, the complaints department could have shut up shop.

Instead, it was the advantage Maidenhead gained from their extra player, with Wycombe down to ten men, that led to their last gasp decider, scored after numerous minutes of second half injury time.

With Tony Horseman, Dave Thomas and Ian Rundle watching from the touchline along with John Maskell, Wycombe fielded a sadly out of touch Vince Faulkner in a defence line made up by Delaney, Lailey and ever-faithful Charlie Gale—the one player on the visitors' side to show any particular worth.

Suddaby moved up with Blunt and Baker as the middle brain house, which looked good on paper only, while the front three, after leading a flurry of activity towards the Maidenhead end in the latter stages of part one, fell away inconspicuously.

Geoff Anthony in particular did less on Saturday than Wycombe supporters have become accustomed to him doing in five minutes on any other day.

But Maidenhead had nothing more to offer. A big side hardly afraid to use their weight, they were in serious trouble at one stage, and even when Wanderers were left to play on with a depleted line up, they failed to emphasise the fact that they had a spare man.

As Wycombe fought their way on top before half time, it needed a number of goalline clearances to keep the score sheet blank.

Searle and Blunt went close, before a Delaney header was cleared by Runicles following a lengthy scramble in which a Wycombe goal seemed near at hand for minutes on end.

After the interval, Blunt shot close from a difficult angle, and Hartridge took the ball off Anthony's feet after the little Welshman had hesitated in a scoring position.

Maidenhead's left winger Clements, a late inclusion, limped off to be replaced by Hester after 53 minutes.

Eleven minutes later . . . almost the first bit of fun and games of the day; Searle running through on the right, was scythed down by McPhee, took a glancing kick at the centre half and duly got himself sent to an early shower.

Mr. McPhee escaped rather luckily with a booking, and Wanderers' fans behind the Maidenhead goal soon showed their feelings about the matter, creating a need for Wanderers chairman, Mr. Jack Smethurst to station himself in that section of the crowd to stop any further misbehaviour.

But for a long time it seemed as though ten-man Wanderers would survive to see a replay. In fact all they did was survive to see a much extended period of injury time, and Howarth's free kick turned into goal by right half, Jim Hartridge.

Maidenhead United: P. Spittles; T. Runicles, D. Richardson; J. Hartridge, I. McPhee, B. Pitts; D. Woolley, J. Hawarth, M. Chatterton, G. Underwood, C. Clements. Sub.: Hester for Clements after 53 minutes.

Wycombe Wanderers: K. O'Brien; V. Faulkner, C. Gale; J. Lailey, J. Delaney, K. Blunt; P. Suddaby, B. Baker, G. Anthony, K. Searle, J. Hutchinson. Sub.: K. Stephenson (not used).

Referee: Mr J. J. Faulkner (B. and B. F.A.).